

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MOPS, PINS, CG, FR

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT GISCARD ON SHABA INTERVENTION

1. PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING'S ANNOUNCED TELEVISION APPEARANCE TO DISCUSS THE FRENCH INTERVENTION IN SHABA CONSISTED IN THE EVENT ONLY OF THE RESPONSES TO THREE QUESTIONS POSED BY TV NEWSCASTERS AND TAPED SHORTLY BEFORE THE 8 PM NEWSBROADCAST. THE QUESTIONS IN ESSENCE: A) HOW WAS THE DECISION MADE TO INTERVENE; B) WHY WAS IT UNDERTAKEN WITH A PARA DROP IN SUCH HASTE; AND C) WHEN WILL FRANCE GET OUT.

2. GISCARD'S RELATIVELY BRIEF RESPONSES WERE NOT ENTIRELY RESPONSIVE. THE DECISION TO ACT, HE SAID, WAS MADE WHEN IT BECAME EVIDENT THAT THE WESTERN RESIDENTS OF KOLWEZI WERE IN GRAVE AND INCREASING DANGER AND THAT SOME PEOPLE HAD ALREADY BEEN EXECUTED. IT WAS UNDERTAKEN AT THE REQUEST OF THE ZAIRE GOVERNMENT. IT

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ALSO BECAME CLEAR DURING THE DAY OF THE EIGHTEENTH THAT HASTE WAS NECESSARY AS THE CIVILIANS WERE BEING THREATENED WITH EXECUTION. WIDESPREAD PUBLICITY TO THE EFFECT THAT AN OPERATION WAS BEING MOUNTED INCREASED THE DANGER TO THE CIVILIANS AT KOLWEZI. IT WAS NECESSARY TO ACT QUICKLY AND A PARA DROP WAS DETERMINED TO BE THE QUICKEST AND MOST EFFECTIVE MEANS. GISCARD

EXPLAINED THAT THE OPERATION DIFFERED FROM THAT OF A YEAR AGO WHEN ONLY TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE WAS GIVEN TO ZAIRE BECAUSE THIS TIME THE SECURITY OF FRENCH CITIZENS WAS AT STAKE. HE CONCLUDED HIS REMARKS BY SAYING THAT THE OPERATION WOULD END AND THE FRENCH FORCES LEAVE WHEN THE SECURITY OF THE RESIDENTS HAD BEEN ASSURED.

3. COMMENT: IF ANY QUESTION ABOUT DIFFERENCES WITH BELGIAN GOVERNMENT WERE ASKED, THEY WERE NOT AIRED. GISCARD WAS PRECISE IN SAYING THAT THE OPERATION WAS BEING UNDERTAKEN BECAUSE FRENCH AND OTHER FOREIGNERS WERE MENACED BUT HE AT NO TIME DESCRIBED THE OBJECT OF THE EXERCISE AS AN EVACUATION.

4. IN UNRELATED REMARKS FOR THE PRESS AT ANOTHER FORUM VISITING PRESIDENT SENGHOR OF SENEGAL SAID THAT HE APPROVED OF THE FRENCH INTERVENTION AT THE REQUEST OF THE ZAIRE GOVERNMENT. REFERRING TO OAU PRESIDENT BONGO'S CALL FOR AFRICAN SUPPORT OF THE ZAIRE GOVERNMENT HE SAID THAT HE HAD INSTRUCTED HIS PRIME MINISTER TO EXAMINE SENEGALESE LAWS TO DETERMINE WHAT MIGHT BE DONE. IN THE MEANTIME, A SENEGALESE OFFICER WAS BEING SENT TO ZAIRE TO REPORT ON THE SITUATION.

5. THE ZAIRE OPERATION DOMINATES THE NEWS AND NOW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT IT IS UNDER WAY THERE IS TENSE WAITING FOR NEWS OF THE FATE OF THE FOREIGN RESIDENTS OF KOLWEZI. EARLY PRESS REPORTS OF NUMBERS OF EXECUTED BODIES HAVING BEEN FOUND BY THE ADVANCING LEGIONAIRES ARE BEING CITED BY COMMENTATORS TONIGHT AS JUSTIFICATION FOR THE QUICK FRENCH ACTION.
HARTMAN

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